THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING

ST. AUGUSTINE

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THE
PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING

A Study in the Symbolism
of Language

A TRANSLATION OF

Saint Augustine's
De Magistro

BY
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INTRODUCTORY

SAINT AUGUSTINE'S *De Magistro,* Englished here under the title of " The Philosophy of Teaching or a Study in the Symbolism of Language ", was written about A.D. 389, probably during the third year after his conversion. He was baptized by Saint Ambrose in Milan at Easter time, 387. In the survey of all his written works which Augustine made nearly forty years later, *De Magistro* is number twelve, counting books or distinct headings, it stands number twenty-eight in the list.*

* The headings follow:

De Academicis ..... Libri 3
De Beata Vita ..... Liber 1
De Ordine ..... Libri 2
Soliloquiorum ..... Libri 2
De Imnortalitate Animae ..... Liber 1
De Grammatica
De Dialectica
De Rhetorica
De Geometrica
De Arithmetica
De Philosophia
..... Libri 6 (these six school books are now lost)
De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae ..... Libri 2
De Quantitate Animae ..... Liber 1

The Latin text of *De Magistro* was printed separately for school use by the present translator about four years ago. Later this was followed by the text of *De Beata Vita,* the *Sololoquia, De Immortalitate Animae* and *De Quantitate Animae,* now in type. The purpose was, not to substitute the Christian for the pre-Christian classics, but to fill out and complete the study of style and expression in the older types by a knowledge of the later correct form and thought of Christian teachers. So far as the translator's experience goes the venture has proved practicable and a help to students in right thinking and a useable knowledge of Latin.

The purpose of the translation is mainly to place within the reach of English readers, students and teachers some tangible evidence of facts in the lives of Christian thinkers, to show the quality of their thought, their methods of teaching, their contribution to the education and the learning of their time. A chief aim of the translator has been to do something to counteract a widely prevalent tradition in the

De Libro Arbitrio .....Libri 3
De Genesi ad Manichaeos .....Libri 2
De Musica .....Libri 6
De Magistro .....Liber 1

"history of education", which exhibits the Christian Fathers unfairly and untruthfully as patrons of "reaction" and leaders in a "retrograde movement".

A translation of course labors always under the difficulty of differences in idiom. This difficulty is particularly hard to overcome in colloquial and dialogue forms, where the very essence of clearness is found often in the brevity and conciseness of untranslatable terms. The translator acknowledges these inevitable defects, sometimes in diction, sometimes in the thought, which will not quite square with our own accepted forms of English.

F. E. T.

Villanova, Pennsylvania,
November 1, 1923.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING

CHAPTER I

AUGUSTINE—What, as it appears to you, do we wish to do when we speak?

ADEODATUS—So far as it occurs to me now, we intend either to teach or to learn.

AUG.—I see, and I am agreed as to one of these; for it is evident that we intend to teach by speaking, but how to learn?

AD. — How think you, indeed, but by asking questions?

AUG. — Even then, I take it that we aim at no other thing than teaching. For [to prove it] do you interrogate, I ask, for any other purpose than to teach him whom you question what you wish to know?

AD.—You speak truly.

AUG.—You see, therefore, now that our aim, in the use of language, is none other than to teach.

AD.—I see it not clearly: for, if speaking is just putting forth words, I see that we do this when we

sing, which we do often when we are alone, where no one is present to learn. The purpose then, I think, is not to teach.

Aug.—But there is, I believe, a kind of teaching by way of recalling, an important division indeed, which this very subject of our discourse will prove. But, if you think that we do not learn when we remember, or that he does not teach who recalls, I will not oppose you: and I will acknowledge then two reasons for speaking (i. e.) to teach, and to renew the mind whether of others or of ourselves. This we do even when we sing: or does it not so appear to you?

Ad.—Not clearly—For it is seldom indeed that I sing in order to recall to mind, but only to please myself.

Aug.—I see how you think. But do you not see that what pleases in chant is a certain harmony of sound, which, just because it is increased or diminished by means of words, is one thing considered as language, quite another considered as chant? For chant is made by the flute and the harp; birds also sing, and we sometimes hum music without words, which sound can be called chant, it can not be said to be rational speech. Or is there anything that you can say against this?

AD.—Nothing at all.

AUG. — Is it clear to you, then, that language was instituted for this sole purpose—Either to teach or to renew the mind?

AD.—It does so appear, if the fact did not move me that when we pray we speak surely: yet it is not right to think that God is taught by us, or that He must be memorialized as to our wants.

AUG.—I think that you are cognizant of the fact that we are told to pray in the privacy of our own apartments [1] (by which are meant the inner recesses of the mind) for one reason only, that is, that God does not need to be taught or reminded by our speech in order to give us what we desire. He indeed who speaks sends forth a sign of his will by means of articulate sound. But God is to be found, and He is to be adored in the inmost court of the rational soul, which is called the "interior man". There He has deigned to make His temple. Or have you not read in the Apostle (St. Paul): "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" [2] Also that Christ dwells in the "interior man"? [3] And

[1] Matthew, VI, 6.

[2] I Corinthians, III, 16.

[3] Ephesians, III, 17.

have you not noticed in the Psalm: "Speak in your hearts, and repent in the privacy of your own den." "Offer the sacrifice of justice, and hope in the Lord"?[4] Where, think you, but in the temple of the mind and in the privacy of our own heart? But where sacrifice is offered, there prayer also is made. Wherefore when we pray there is no need of the expression of language, that is, of sounding words: except, perhaps, as in the prayer of priests, for the purpose of making known the action of the mind, not in order that God may hear, but that the people may attend to the words of prayer, and by a kind of likeness of thought and a common operation of the mind, may learn how to depend upon God: or do you think otherwise? *

AD.—I am in agreement fully.

AUG.—It does not move you, then, that, when the Supreme Master was teaching his followers how to pray, He taught them certain forms of words, wherein, it appears, He taught them how we are to speak in prayer?

AD.—That does not move me at all: for He did not teach them words, but realities, by means of

[4] Psalm IV, vers. 5-6.

* See APPENDIX, note i,—page 96.

words, by which they are to be reminded to whom prayer is to be made and for what object, when we pray (as has been said) in the privacy of our own mind.

AUG.—You understand rightly: for you notice, I believe, at the same time, even when one frames an argument, although we may utter no sound, yet, because we are thinking words, we are speaking within, in the presence of the soul: So also in talking we do no other thing than recall, when memory, where words are stored away, revolving these, causes to come to mind the very realities of which words are the signs.

AD.—I understand, and I follow you.

CHAPTER II

AUG. — It is agreed, therefore, between us that words are signs.

AD.—It is agreed.

AUG.—What as to the meaning of a sign—If a thing does not signify something, can that thing be a sign?

AD.—It can not.

AUG. — How many words are in this line: — Si nihil ex tanta superis placet urbe relinqui? [5]

[5] Virgil—Aeneid, book II, line 159.

AD.—Eight.

AUG.—There are therefore eight signs.

AD.—True.

AUG.—You understand this line, I believe.

AD.—Well enough, I think.

AUG.—Tell me one by one what the words signify.

AD.—I see indeed what *if* signifies, but I find no other word by which it can be expressed.

AUG.—Do you find this at least, whatever is signified by this word, where is it?

AD. — It appears to me that *if* signifies a hesitating: now where is hesitation, if it is not in the mind.

AUG. — I take that for the present. Follow on over the rest.

AD.—"*Nihil*"—What does *nothing* signify but that which is not?

AUG. — Perhaps you are right: but what you granted above recalls me from giving assent. You granted, that is, that no thing is a sign unless it signifies something. Therefore the second word in this line is not a sign because it does not signify something. Wrongly, then, was it agreed between us that all words are signs, or that every sign must signify something.

AD. — You urge me too hard: but surely it is

utterly foolish to express any word when we have nothing to say. But you now, speaking with me, send forth no sound, I believe that is to no purpose. But by means of every word which proceeds from your lips you give me a sign by which I am to understand something. Therefore you ought not to utter these two syllables, *nihil,* when you speak, if by them you do not signify something. But, if you see that they are and are pronounced, and that we are taught or reminded of something when they strike the ear, then you see surely what I wish to say, though I can not explain it.

Aug.—What, then, shall we do? Shall we say that by this word (nihil) a certain state of mind is signified, when it sees not its object, and as yet finds it not to be, or thinks that it has found it not to be a reality, rather than say that it is a something which is not?

Ad. — That perhaps is what I was laboring to explain.

Aug.—Let us pass on then, lest we incur a very serious absurdity.

Ad.—What absurdity, pray?

Aug.—That nothing detains us, and we endure delay.

Ad.—That is amusing indeed; and yet I see that

it can happen, I know not how. Nay, more, I see plainly that it has happened.

AUG.—In its own proper place, if God grants it, we shall consider this kind of conflict more thoroughly. Now get you back to that line, and try to explain, as you can, what its remaining words signify.

AD.—The third word is a preposition *ex*, in place of which I think we can say *de*.

AUG.—I am not asking you that, to express, in place of one word well known, another word equally well known which has the same meaning, if, indeed, it has the same meaning. But, granting for the time that it has, surely if the poet had said not: "*ex tanta urbe*", but "*de tanta*", and I were to ask you what *de* signifies, you would say *ex;* since these would be two words, that is, signs signifying, as you think, some one thing. But I am asking for that very reality, I know not what it is, which is signified by these two terms.

AD. — It seems to me that (this preposition *ex*) signifies a kind of separation from that reality in which something had been, which is now said to be *out* of it, whether that reality remains not, as in this line, the city, Troy being destroyed, some Trojans could yet remain *out* of it; or whether it remains, as

we say *out* of the city Rome there are traders in Africa.

Aug.—Granting that these things are so, and not counting up how many points perhaps may be found outside this your rule, this surely you can easily note, namely that you have been explaining words by means of words, that is, signs by means of signs; moreover signs well known by signs equally well known. But I would wish to have you show me, if you can, those very realities of which these are the signs.

CHAPTER III

Ad.—I wonder that you know not, or rather that you are pretending that you do not know that what you wish can absolutely not be done by an answer of mine. We indeed are holding conversation where we can not give an answer except by means of words. But you are asking for those realities, which, whatever they are, are surely not words, which yet you ask of me also by means of words. You therefore ask first without the medium of words, so that, on that condition, I may be able to answer.

Aug.—You act upon your right, I acknowledge: but, if I were to ask you what these three syllables

mean when *paries* is pronounced, could you not point it out with your finger, so that I would see clearly the very reality, of which this word of three syllables is the sign, by your pointing, and yet utter not a word?

AD. — I grant that can be done in the case of nouns only which signify things corporeal, and on condition that the corporeal realities are present.

AUG.—Do we say that color is a body, or do we not rather say that it is a certain quality of bodies?

AD.—So it is.

AUG. — Why then cannot this be pointed out? Or do you add to the definition, bodies, the qualities also of bodies, so that these also, when they are present, can be shown without words?

AD. — I, when I said bodies, wished to have it understood of all things corporeal, that is of everything in bodies, that is perceived by the senses.

AUG. — Consider here yet again whether some points are not to be excepted.

AD.—You counsel well: for I should have said, not all corporeal things (and qualities), but all things visible: for I confess that smell and taste and weight and heat and other phenomena, which belong to the different seness, while they can not be perceived without bodies, and therefore are corporeal, can not yet be pointed out by your finger.

AUG.—Have you never seen how men, in a manner, converse with the deaf by means of gesture, and the deaf also by gesture ask questions and answer, and teach or indicate, if not all that they will, then very much? When this is done truly not visible things only are made plain, but sounds and tastes also and other things of this kind. Indeed actors also on the stage, by movement often lay open and unfold complete stories without words.

AD.—I have nothing to say against that, except that not only I, but that moving actor also can not make plain to you the meaning of that *ex* without words.

AUG.—What you say, perhaps is true: But let us imagine that he can; you will not doubt, I think, that whatever that movement of the body is, by which he will try to make clear that which is signified by this word, it will be not the reality itself but a sign. Wherefore he also will indicate, not indeed a word by means of a sign, but yet he will just as surely indicate a sign by means of a sign: so that this monosyllable *ex* and that gesture will signify one and the same reality, which I would wish to have shown to me without the making of a sign.

AD.—How, pray, can what you ask be done?

AUG.—As the wall could.

AD.—Not even that, so far as reason advancing has taught, can be shown without a sign; for the extending of the finger is not indeed the wall, but a sign is given by which the wall may be seen. I see nothing, therefore, that can be shown without signs.

AUG.—What if I were to ask you what walking is, and you were to rise and walk, would not you then make use of the reality itself (walking) rather than words or any other signs in order to teach me?

AD.—I acknowledge it is so, and I am ashamed that I did not see a thing so evident, from which now thousands of things occur to me which can be shown by themselves, and not by signs, to eat, to drink, to sit down, to stand up, to shout, and unnumbered other things.

AUG.—Come now tell me, if I, absolutely ignorant of the meaning of this word, were to ask you walking what walking is, how would you teach me?

AD. — I would do the very same thing a little more quickly, so that by something new after your interrogation you would be made to note the fact, and yet nothing else would be done but that which was to be shown.

AUG.—Do you know that it is one thing to walk, another to make haste? And indeed he who walks does not straightway hasten; and he who makes

haste does not necessarily walk. For we speak of haste in writing, in reading, and other things without number. Wherefore while you were doing more quickly what you had been doing, I, after my interrogation, might think that to walk is the same as to make haste, for that you had added anew, and therefore I would be deceived.

Ad. — I confess that we can not show what an objective reality is without the means of a sign, if we are engaged in the act of that reality when we are interrogated. For if we add nothing anew, he who interrogates will think that we are not willing to answer, and will take himself as despised in the very fact of our persevering in what we were doing. But if he asks about those things which we can do, and, if he asks at a time when we are not so engaged, then we can, following the interrogation, by doing what he inquires about, show him what he asks by means of the objective reality rather than a sign: Excepting perhaps (this one point) talking, if one should ask me talking what talking is: For whatever I shall say in order to teach him, I must talk. Whence continuing I will teach until I make clear to him what he wants to know, not departing from that very reality which he has desired to have shown to him; and looking for no other symbols by which to make it clear but language itself.

CHAPTER IV

AUG.—Very keen, indeed. Wherefore see now whether it is agreed between us that we can make clear those things without signs, which we are not doing when we are questioned, and which yet we can straightway do; or perhaps the very signs that we are doing (as language): for when we speak we make signs, whence to signify has its name.*

AD.—It is agreed.

AUG. — When therefore our question is about certain signs, signs can be made evident by means of signs: but when we study realities that are not signs, they are made manifest either by doing that very thing if it can be done, after we are interrogated, or by giving signs by which the mind's attention is turned to the object.

AD.—So it is.

AUG. — In this threefold division, therefore, let us, if you will, in the first place, consider this, namely, that signs are shown by means of signs; for words are not the only signs.

AD.—No, they are not.

AUG. — It seems to me, therefore, that we, by means of words in speaking, either signify words

* de quo dictum est significare.

or other signs, as when we express the word *gesture* or *letter* (for objects signified by these two words are themselves also signs); or again we signify something else that is not itself a sign, as when we say *stone*. This word is indeed a sign, for it signifies something, but what is signified is not therefore a sign. This class, however, that is the class where those realities which are not signs are signified by words, does not belong to this division which we have taken up for study here. For we are engaged now in studying that class (of words) in which signs are signified by means of (other) signs; and there we found a two-fold subdivision, that is, when by means of signs we teach either the self-same or other signs: Or does it not so appear to you?

Ad.—That is evident.

Aug.—Tell me, therefore, to which organic sense do those signs belong which are words?

Ad.—To the hearing?

Aug.—How about gestures?

Ad.—They belong to sight.

Aug.—How when we find words written, are they not then words? Or are they more truly understood to be the signs of words? As a word may be defined as that which is uttered by articulate voice with some meaning: but voice can be perceived by

no other sense than hearing, so it is that when a word is written, a sign is made to the eyes, by which that which belongs to the ears, comes to the mind.

AD.—I am agreed entirely.

AUG.—To this also, I think, you will assent: that when we say name (or noun) we signify something.

AD.—It is true.

AUG.—What, tell me, do we signify?

AD.—That, namely, which anything is called, as Romulus, Rome, virtue, a river, and others innumerable.

AUG.—Do these four nouns not signify some objective reality?

AD.—They do indeed.

AUG.—Is there not some difference between these nouns and the objective realities which are signified by them?

AD.—A great difference, indeed.

AUG.—I would like to hear from you what that difference is.

AD.—This difference, in the first place, at least, that they (the nouns) are signs, these (the realities signified) are not.

AUG.—Is it agreed that we call *signifiable* those

things that can be signified by means of signs, and themselves are not signs, just as we give the name visible to things that can be seen, so that thence we can study them more readily?

AD.—It is agreed truly.

AUG. — How as to those four signs which you pronounced just a moment ago, can they not be signified by some other sign?

AD. — I marvel that you think that I have forgotten now that we have found how things which are written are signs of words uttered by the voice —signs of signs.

AUG.—Tell me what is the difference between the two.

AD. — That these latter are visible, the former, audible. Why indeed not admit this term, if we have accepted signifiable?

AUG.—I do admit it fully, and I thank you for it. But again, I ask, can not these four signs be signified by some other audible sign, as you have referred to visible signs?

AD.—That also, I remember, has just been stated. For I answered that a noun signifies something, and to this same signification I submitted the four; and I recognize that both this (a noun) and the others (realities), if they be uttered by the voice, are audible.

Aug. — What difference, therefore, is there between an audible sign and the audible realities signified, which in turn are signs?

Ad.—Between that indeed which we speak of as a noun, and the four subjects which we ranked under the meaning of that term, I see this difference, that the former (noun) is an audible sign of audible signs, but these latter are signs, indeed, audible; yet not signs of signs, but signs of realities, in part visible, as is Rome, Romulus, river, in part intelligible, as is virtue.

Aug.—I take your answer, and I approve it: but do you know that everything that is uttered by articulate voice with some meaning is called a word?

Ad.—I do know.

Aug.—Therefore a noun also is a word, since we see that it is uttered with a meaning by means of articulate voice: and when we say that an eloquent man uses fair words, he uses also fair nouns: and when the slave in Terence replied to the old master: "Fair words I ask" he expressed also many nouns.

Ad.—I am agreed.[6]

Aug.—You grant, therefore, that by these two syllables which we pronounce when we say *verbum*,

[6] Publius Terentius, Afer, born in Carthage about 185 B. C. The quotation is from *Andria*, Act I, scen. 2.

a noun also is signified; and therefore this is the sign of that.

Ad.—I grant it.

Aug. — This also I would have you answer—Since a word is the sign of a noun, and a noun is the sign of river, and river is the sign of a reality which can be seen; just as between this reality and river, that is, the sign of it, and again between this sign and noun, which you said is the sign of this sign, there is some difference; so what think you is the difference between the sign of a noun, which we found to be a word, and the noun itself, of which the word is a sign?

Ad.—I understand this to be a difference, that those things which are signified by a noun (or a name) are signified therefore by means of a word: For as *noun* is a word, so also is *river* a word. But everything that is signified by means of a word is not signified therefore as a noun. For that *si* which is at the head of the line proposed by you, and this *ex,* on which, talking now for a long time, we have come thus far by way of reason, are words, and yet they are not nouns; and many such are found. Wherefore, since all nouns are words, it is evident, I think, what difference there is between a word and a noun, that is, between the sign of that sign

which signifies no other signs, and the sign of that sign which in turn signifies other signs.

AUG.—Do you grant that every horse is an animal, yet that every animal is not a horse?

AD.—Who would doubt it?

AUG.—There is this difference, therefore, between a noun and a word which is between horse and animal. Unless this perhaps keeps you from giving your assent, that we speak of a *verb* (verbum, a word) also in another sense, where those words are signified which are declined through time, as *scribo, scripsi, lego, legi;* which, it is clear, are not nouns.

AD.—You have said just what was making me hesitate.

AUG.—Let that not move you. We speak indeed of signs in a general sense, comprehending everything that symbolizes anything; there we find words are included. We speak again of military standards [7] which are properly so named (symbols of allegiance, as our national flag). Words do not belong to this class. And yet, if I were to tell you that as every horse is an animal, but not every animal a horse, so every word is a sign, but not every sign a word, you would, as I think, not hesitate.

[7] signa militaria.

AD.—Now I understand, and I am fully agreed that there is that difference between the general term *word* and a *noun* which we find between *animal* and *horse*.

AUG. — Do you note also, when we say *animal*, that this trisyllabic noun which is uttered by the voice, is one reality, the thing signified quite another?

AD.—I granted that above referring to all signs and to all things signifiable.

AUG.—Does it appear to you that all signs signify something other than they are, as this word of three syllables when we say *animal* does not signify what itself is?

AD.—Not at all: for when we say *sign*, that word signifies not only all other signs whatsoever, but it signifies itself also; for itself is a word, and all words are signs.

AUG.—How in this word of two syllables when we pronounce *verbum*, is not something similar verified? For if everything that is uttered by articulate voice with some meaning is symbolized by this word of two syllables, then itself also is included in this class.

AD.—So it is.

AUG. — Now, is not the same true of a noun?

For the word signifies nouns of all kinds, and *noun* itself is a noun of the neuter gender. Or, if I were to ask you what part of speech a noun is, could you correctly give me any answer other than a noun?

AD.—You speak truth.

AUG. — There are, therefore, symbols, which, among other things that they symbolize, symbolize also themselves.

AD.—There are.

AUG. — Does it appear to you that this word of four syllables, which we pronounce when we say *conjunctio,* is of this class?

AD.—Not at all: for the things which it signifies are not nouns, but itself is a noun.

CHAPTER V

AUG.—You have taken note well. Now take this point: See whether signs can be found which signify each other mutually, so that this may be signified by that, and that by this in turn: for this is not verified in that word of four syllables, when we say *conjunctio,* and the real objects which are signified by it when we express them: *si, vel, nam, namque, nisi, ergo, quoniam,* and the like. These all are signified by the one (*conjunction*); but by not one of these is this quadrisyllabic word signified.

AD.—I see, and I am eager to know what are the signs which signify each other mutually.

AUG.—You do not know, then, that when we say *noun* and *word* we express two words?

AD.—I do know.

AUG. — How this, then, do you not know that when we say *noun* and *word* we are expressing two nouns?

AD.—That also I know.

AUG.—You know, therefore, that noun is signified by means of a word, and *word* by means of a noun.

AD.—I am agreed.

AUG.—Can you tell in what these two differ, excepting this point, that they are written and pronounced differently?

AD. — Possibly I can; for I see that difference which I stated just a little ago. For when we express *words* we signify everything that is uttered by the voice articulate with some meaning: whence every noun and noun itself, when we express it, is a word; but not every word is a noun, though *word* is a noun when we use it in a sentence.

AUG.—What if someone should state to you and prove that as every noun is a word, so every word is a noun; could you find what is their difference apart from the different sound of their letters?

AD.—I could not: and I think there would be no other difference at all.

AUG. — What if all sounds uttered by articulate voice with some meaning are indeed both words and nouns; and yet for one purpose are nouns, for another words, will there be any difference then between a noun and a word?

AD.—I do not understand how that can be.

AUG.—This at least you understand, that every colored object is visible, and every visible object is colored: although these two words (colored and visible) have a distinct and a different meaning.

AD.—I understand.

AUG.—What, then, if in this way every word is a noun, and every noun a word, though these two nouns or these two words, that is *noun* and *word*, may have a different meaning?

AD. — I see now that this can be true; but I am waiting to have you show me how it is done.

AUG.—Everything that goes forth by means of articulate voice with some meaning you note, I believe, both strikes the ear so that it can be perceived, and is stored in the memory so that it can be made an object of knowledge.

AD.—I take note.

AUG.—Two things, therefore, are verified when we utter anything with such voice.

AD.—So it is.

AUG.—What if, of these two, words get their name from one fact, nouns from another: words, that is, (*verba*) [8] from vibrating, nouns from knowing; so that the former may have come to have its name from the ears, the latter from the mind?

AD.—I will grant that when you shall have shown me how we can say correctly that all words are nouns.

AUG. — That is easy: for you have learned and you retain, I believe, that a pronoun is so named because it can stand in the place of a noun, that yet it marks reality with signification less clear than the noun. Indeed, so, I think, he defined to whom you responded in the study of grammar: A pronoun is a part of speech, which, placed instead of a noun, signifies the same thing, though less completely.

AD.—I do recall and I approve.

AUG.—You see, therefore, according to this definition, that pronouns can serve only nouns, and can stand only in their stead, as when we say: this man; the ruler himself; the same woman; this gold; that silver: This, himself, same, this and that are pro-

[8] verba a verberando: nomina a noscendo.

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nouns: man, ruler, woman, gold, silver are nouns, by which the realities are more completely signified than by the pronouns.

Ad.—I see, and I am agreed.

Aug. — You now give me a few conjunctions, any that you choose.

Ad.—Et, que, at, atque.

Aug.—Do not all these which you have expressed appear to you to be nouns?

Ad.—Not at all.

Aug. — I at least appear to you to have spoken correctly when I said: all these that you have expressed?

Ad.—Right, indeed: and now I understand, when you have made it wonderfully clear, that I did express nouns: for otherwise the expression *all these* could not be used correctly. But yet I fear that you appear to me to have spoken correctly therefore because I admit that these four conjunctions are also words; and so *all these* can be said of them correctly because we say correctly: all these words. But if you ask me: What part of speech is *words,* I answer nothing other than a noun: Wherefore perhaps it is to this noun that the pronoun refers, so that your language is correct.

Aug. — Shrewdly, indeed, are you wrong: but,

that you may be undeceived, note more closely what I say, if, in fact, I can say it as I wish: for to treat of words by means of words is a puzzling task as is the intertwining and rubbing of one's fingers, where it is hardly known, except by him who does it, which fingers are itching and which are relieving the sensation of itch.

AD.—Behold, I am all attention, for this figure has aroused me thoroughly.

AUG.—Words certainly are made up of sound and letters.

AD.—So they are.

AUG.—Therefore (to use, in the first place, that authority which is most dear to us), when the Apostle Paul says: "There was not in Christ *it is* and *it is not,* but *it is* was in Him",[9] it is not to be thought, I believe, that these three letters, which we pronounce when we say *est,* were in Christ, but that rather which is signified by these three letters.

AD.—You speak truth.

AUG.—You understand, then, that he who says: "It is was in Him", has stated nothing else than that, that which was in Him, was called *est:* as if he had said: "In Him was power", he surely

[9] II Corinthians, I, 19.

would be understood as saying (or meaning) no other thing than that "that which is called power was in Him": so that we are not to think that the two syllables, which we pronounce when we say *virtus* were in Him, instead of the reality which is signified by these two syllables.

AD.—I understand and follow you.

AUG. — How do you not now understand this also, that it makes no difference whether one says: *virtus appellatur*, or *virtus nominatur* — virtue is called, or virtue is named?

AD.—That is evident.

AUG. — Therefore it is evident that it makes no difference whether one says thus: what was in Him *is called,* or what was in him *is named?*

AD.—I see that here also there is no difference.

AUG.—Do you see then also what I wish to prove?

AD.—Not yet, clearly.

AUG.—Do you not then see that a noun is that by which some reality is named?

AD.—That I see, nothing more surely.

AUG. — You see, therefore, that *est* is a noun, since that which "was in him" is named est.

AD.—I can not deny it.

AUG. — But if I were to ask you what part of speech EST is, you would, I think, say not that it is

a noun, but a verb; though reason has shown that it is also a noun.

AD.—It is so, just as you say.

AUG.—Do you hesitate to admit now that other parts of speech are nouns in the same way in which we have proved?

AD. — I doubt it not, since I acknowledge that they also signify something. But, if you ask what individually the realities which they signify are called, that is, what they are named, I can answer only those very parts of speech which they are, which we do not call nouns: though we are convinced, I see, that they are nouns.

AUG.—Does it not move you that someone may rise to make this our reasoning fall by saying that it is not the authority of words, but of reality that we must grant to the Apostle: wherefore the foundation of this proof is not so solid as we think. For it may be that Saint Paul, though he lived most correctly, and gave precepts, yet perhaps did not speak correctly when he said: *"est in illo erat"*; particularly since he himself acknowledges that he is unskilled in speech? How think you now is such a one to be answered?

AD.—I have nothing to oppose; and I beg you to find some one to whom the knowledge of words is

granted to be very high, by whose authority you may prove preferably what you aim to do.

Aug.—All authorities aside, does not the reasoning itself seem to you connected, where it is proved that something is signified by every part of speech; and that from that it has a name, and if it has a name it is called by that name, and if it is called by a name, it is a noun. This is very easily discerned in different languages. Who indeed does not see that if you ask what the Greeks name that which we name *quis*, the answer is *tis;* what the Greeks name that which we name *volo*, the answer is *thelo;* what the Greeks name that which we name *bene*, the answer is *kalos;* what the Greeks name that which we name *scriptum*, the answer is *gegrammenon;* what the Greeks name that which we name *et*, the answer is *kai;* what the Greeks name that which we name *ab*, the answer is *apo;* what the Greeks name that which we name *heu*, the answer is *hoi:*—and now in all these parts of speech which I have enumerated who does not see that he who questions speaks correctly?—which could not be if they (the various parts of speech) were not used as nouns. By this reasoning, therefore, we can hold that Saint Paul spoke correctly, aside from the authority of all those who are skilled in speech.

What need, then, to look for someone on whose word our decision is to rest?

But in order that no one, too slow to understand, or too stubborn to admit it, may still insist, and say that he will yield only to those authors to whom the laws of language are granted by all men, what can be found more excellent in the Latin language than Cicero? Yet he, in his best orations, which are named "Against Verres", calls *coram,*[10] a preposition, or it may be in this place an adverb, a noun. However, since it may be that I do not understand this passage perfectly; and it can be explained otherwise by someone else, it is not, I think, to the point to solve the problem. The worthiest masters of argument teach now that a complete sentence is made up of a noun and a verb. This sentence, they say, may be affirmative or negative. Cicero, in a certain place, calls this a pronouncement:[11] and when it is the third person of the verb, it must be, they say, the nominative case of the noun: and they say rightly, as you will acknowledge with me, I think, if you reflect how

[10] *In Verrem*—Actione II, lib. 2, nn. 41-42.

[11] Pronouncement — "Id est, pronuntiatum, quod est verum aut falsum". — Cicero, *Tusculanae Quaestiones,* I, 7.

we say: A man takes his seat — A horse runs. These are two pronouncements.[12]

AD.—I understand.

AUG.—You see that in each sentence the noun is singular, in one it is man, in the other, horse; and the verbs, in one, "takes his seat",[13] in the other, "runs".

AD.—I do see.

AUG.—Therefore, if I were to say "sits" only, or "runs", you rightly might ask me *who* or *what*, so as to get my answer: *man* or *horse*, or animal, or anything else, whereby the noun corresponding to the verb would complete the sentence, that is, the expressed judgment by which something can be affirmed or denied.

AD.—I understand.

AUG.—Note, now, the rest; and suppose that we see something at a distance, and that we are not sure whether it is an animal or a stone, or something else: and suppose that I say to you: because it is a man, it is an animal, would that not be illogical?

[12] duo esse pronunciata.

[13] sedet.

AD.—Illogical, yes; but it would not be bad logic if you were to say: if it is a man, it is an animal.

AUG.—You speak correctly: accordingly *if* pleases me in your speech, it pleases you also; but *because* is offensive to both of us.

AD.—I am agreed.

AUG. — See now whether these two sentences make complete pronouncements: "if pleases"; "because offends"?

AD.—Complete, truly.

AUG.—Come, now, tell me which there are verbs, which are nouns?

AD.—The verbs, I see, are *placet* and *displicet;* but the nouns, what other than *if* and *because* (*si* et *quia*)?

AUG.—It is sufficiently proved, then, that these two prepositions are also nouns.

AD.—Quite sufficiently.

AUG.—Can you show for yourself that this same holds, according to the same rule, in other parts of speech also?

AD.—I can.

CHAPTER VI

AUG. — Let us go on, then: and, now, tell me whether, as we have found that all words are nouns, and all nouns are words, so it appears to you that all nouns may be seen to be vocal terms, and all vocal terms nouns.

AD.—Plainly what difference there is here, aside from the difference of the sound of syllables, I see not.

AUG. — And I, for the present, do not oppose, though there are some who make a difference in meaning:—we need not weigh their judgment now. But you note, surely, that we have reached those signs now, which mutually signify each other, with no difference of meaning, but of sound only; and which signify themselves together with all other parts of speech.

AD.—I do not understand.

AUG.—You do not understand, then, that a noun is signified by a vocal term, and a vocal term by a noun; and in such way that, aside from the sound of letters, there is no difference so far as the common noun is concerned: for of the proper noun we say that it belongs to the eight parts of speech in such a way that it does not contain the other seven.

AD.—I understand.

AUG.—And that is what I have said, that, namely, a vocal term and a noun mutually signify each other.

AD.—I hold that: but how have you said, I ask, that while they signify themselves, they signify themselves together with the other parts of speech?

AUG.—Has not reason shown above that all parts of speech can be said to be nouns and also vocal terms; that is, that they can be signified by means of a noun or a vocal term?

AD.—It is true.

AUG.—What about *noun* itself, that is, the sound [*nomen*] expressed by two syllables, if I ask what you call it, will you not answer correctly: a noun?

AD.—Correctly.

AUG.—Does this symbol, now, so signify itself, which we pronounce by means of four syllables when we say: *conjunctio?* This noun indeed can not be counted with those which signify themselves.

AD.—Correctly, I get it.

AUG.—That is what has been said: that a noun [namely] signifies itself together with other things which it signifies: which you also, of yourself, can understand of the vocal term.

AD.—It is easy now: but this comes to mind to me now, that a noun is spoken of as common or

proper; while a vocal term is not contained among the eight parts of speech. Wherefore I judge that they differ on this point too, beyond the difference of sound.

AUG.—How about *nomen* and *onoma;* think you that there is any difference, beyond the different sound, wherein also the languages are distinct, Latin and Greek?

AD.—Here, indeed, I understand no other difference.

AUG.—We have come to signs, therefore, which both signify themselves, and something else is signified by each in turn, and whatever is signified by one, that also by the other; and there is no difference except in the sound. This, now, we have found to be the fourth, for the three former are understood in the noun and the word.

AD.—Truly, that point is settled.

CHAPTER VII

AUG.—I wish now to have you review what we, in our reasoning, have discovered.

AD.—I will do that so far as I can. First of all, I remember we were searching why we use language, and it was found that we speak for the purpose either of teaching or recalling; since, even when we

ask a question, we do no other thing than that by which he, whom we question, may learn what we want to hear; and in singing, what we seem to do for the sake of delight is not a property of language. In praying to God, of whom we can not think as being taught or reminded by us, words have this force, that by them we either remind ourselves, or others are reminded or taught by us. Then, when it was proved well enough that words are nothing else but signs, and that what does not signify something can not be a sign, you proposed a line, of which I was to try to show what the words, one by one, signify. But this line was: " Si nihil ex tanta superis placet urbe relinqui ". The second word of this line (nihil), though its use is most familiar, its meaning clear, yet, as to its exact signification, we were not finding it: And when it appeared to me that we do not give this word a place to no purpose in speaking, but that by it we teach our hearer something, you replied that by this word, perhaps, a state of mind is indicated, when the mind finds not what it seeks, or thinks that it has not found. You, indeed [suggested this]; but yet you put off the unexplored difficulty of the problem to be cleared up at some other time, avoiding the force of the question by a jest: and do not think that I have for-

gotten your obligation. Next, then, when I was trying hard enough to explain the third word in the line, I was urged by you not to show what one word meant by another word which might have the same meaning, but rather to make clear the objective reality which is signified by words. And, when I had said that this can not be done by our conversation, we came to those things which can be pointed out by the finger to those who question about them. These objects I thought were all things corporeal, but we found them to be only things visible. From this we passed on to the deaf and to actors, I know not just how, to those who signify by gesture, without a word, not only things that can be seen, but almost everything that we speak: we found, however, that these gestures are signs. Then again we began to study how we might show those very realities, which are known by means of signs, without any symbols; since this wall, and color, and everything visible that is pointed out by extending the finger is proved to be shown by a kind of sign. Here, when I had said, wrongly indeed, that no such thing could be found, it was finally agreed between us that those things can be shown without a sign, which we are not doing when we are questioned, and which we can do straightway after we are interrogated: that

language yet does not belong to this class; since it appeared clearly enough, that if we are asked what talking is while we are talking, it is easy to show that by means of itself.

We were reminded then that signs are made manifest by means of signs, or, by means of signs, other things that are not signs, or again, without the medium of a sign, realities [external and visible actions] which we can do following an interrogation about them: and of these three we took up the first to be studied and discussed more carefully. In this discussion it was made clear that there are some signs which are not signified in turn by the signs which they signify, as is this word of four syllables when we say *conjunction*. On the other hand, it was made clear that there are signs also which are signified in turn by the signs which they themselves are, as when we express the word sign, we signify a sign; for sign and word are two signs and also two words. But in this class, where signs signify each other mutually, it was shown that some are unequal in force [or comprehension], others are equal, and others again identical. For this word of two syllables which is expressed when we say *signum* (sign) signifies everything absolutely by which anything is signified: but when we say *word* (*verbum*)

it is not the sign of all signs, but of those only that are uttered by articulate voice. Whence it is clear that though a word may be signified by a sign, and a sign by a word, these latter two syllables by the former, and the former by the latter (*verbum* and *signum*), yet signum has greater comprehension than verbum, since these two syllables (*signum*) signify more objects than the other two (*verbum*). But the general term word and a common noun have the same value. For reason showed that all parts of speech are nouns also, since they can be used in connection with pronouns, and that they get a name can be said of all; and there is not one of them, used in conjunction with a verb, that may not make a complete sentence. But, while a noun and a word may have the same force, for this reason that all words may be also used as nouns, they have yet not the same comprehension. For it was proved quite clearly enough that words are so called from one cause, nouns from another. Indeed, that one of these is found to refer to the vibration of the ear, the other to noting down the thought of the soul, can be understood also from this, that we say speaking correctly: what is the name of this thing, wishing to give the object to the memory; but we are not wont to say: what is the word of this thing. But terms

which signify, not only as much [one as the other], but the very same, we found to be *nomen* and *onoma.* This point truly had escaped me in the division where symbols signify each other mutually, that we had found no symbol which among other things that it signifies, signifies also itself. These points I have recalled so far as I could. You now see, you, whom I believe to have spoken always knowing and sure of what you said, see whether I have set them forth well and in order.

CHAPTER VIII

Aug.—You indeed have reviewed from memory well enough all that I wanted: and, I acknowledge to you, these points are now seen much more clearly by me than they were when by questioning and arguing we both were drawing them forth from some unknown obscurity. But whereto, by such tortuous ways, I am laboring to reach with you, is not easy to say at present. You think perhaps, indeed, that we are jesting and recreating the mind from more serious subjects by apparently childish questions; or that we are looking for some small or unimportant advantage: or, if you have a suspicion that this problem is to bring forth something great, you are eager now to know, or at least to hear it.

But I wish you to be assured that I have not been teaching shallow jests in this conversation, though possibly we do jest, this too is not to be measured in a childish sense, and we are thinking of no little or common good. And yet if I say that there is a certain life of contentment, and that everlasting, whereto, God being our guide, that is, the truth itself leading us. — If I say that thereto I wish to be brought by degrees accommodated to our slow progress, I fear that I may seem to be unwise, because I have begun to enter upon the way not by the study of the very realities themselves, but of symbols only. You will pardon me, then, if I make this prelude with you, not for the purpose of amusing, but to exercise the powers and the keenness of the mind, by which we may be enabled not only to endure, but to love the warmth and the light of that region where is the life of contentment.

Ad.—Go on rather as you have begun, for never shall I think those things worthy of scorn which you shall have thought deserving of words and action.

Aug.—Come, then, let us study now that division where, not signs are signified by means of other signs, but, by means of signs, other things which we call signifiable. And first of all, tell me whether man is man.

AD.—Now, indeed, I know not whether you are jesting.

AUG.—Why so?

AD. — Because you think that I am to be asked whether man is aught else than man.

AUG. — So you would think, I believe, that you are made an object of jest, even if I were to ask if the first syllable of this noun is anything other than *ho,* and the second aught else than *mo.*

AD.—So indeed.

AUG.—But these two syllables united are *homo:* or do you deny it?

AD.—Who can deny it?

AUG. — I am asking, therefore, whether you are these two syllables united.

AD.—Not at all: but I see your purpose.

AUG. — Say it, therefore, so that you may not think of me as offending.

AD.—The logical inference, you think, is that I am not a man.

AUG. — Why, do you not think the same, since you grant that all the foregoing, on which this inference is built, are true [inferences]?

AD.—I shall not tell you what I think, until I hear from you whether you, when you asked if man is man, were asking about these two syllables (*homo*), or the objective reality which they signify.

Aug.—You rather answer on which side you understood my question. For if the question is ambiguous, you should have been on guard against that, and you should not have answered until you were certain as to how I meant the question.

Ad.—How could that ambiguity trip me, when I have answered both: for *homo* is surely *homo;* and these two syllables are nothing more than two syllables; and that which they signify is nothing other than what it is.

Aug.—Keenly that, indeed: but why did you take the word *homo* only, and not the other words that we uttered, for both [symbol and object symbolized]?

Ad.—How is it proved that I did not so understand the other words?

Aug.—To omit other points, if you had understood that first question of mine on the side only of the sounding syllables, you should have answered nothing: it would appear indeed that I had asked nothing: but now, when I have pronounced three words, one of which I have repeated at the center, saying: *utrum homo homo sit,* it is clear that you understood the first word and the last, not the second, as signs: but that you took the second for the objects signified is proved even by this that im-

mediately, without suspicion and secure you thought of answering my question.

AD.—You say truly.

AUG. — Why, therefore, did you choose to take the word at the center only both according to what it sounds and according to what it means?

AD. — Behold, now, I take it on that side only where the object is signified: for I am agreed with you that absolutely we can not carry on a conversation except by means of words, which when they are heard, the mind is carried to the objective realities of which words are the signs. Wherefore, show me now how it is that I am deceived by that sophism in which the conclusion is that I am not a man.

AUG.—No, but I will ask the question again, in order that you yourself may find where you were tripped.

AD.—You do well.

AUG.—I shall not ask, then, what I asked in the first place, because you have granted that now. See, therefore, more carefully whether the syllable *ho* is nothing other than *ho,* and whether *mo* is nothing else than *mo.*

AD.—I see here nothing else at all.

AUG.—See also whether *homo* is formed by the union of these two.

Ad.—I should not have granted that at all: for it was decided, and decided correctly, that when the sign is expressed we take note of the object signified; and, from the consideration of that, we assent to what has been said, or we dissent. But these two syllables pronounced separately, because they have sounded without any signification, are just what they sound. This has been granted.

Aug. — It is granted, therefore, and you hold it fixed in mind that questions are to be answered only on the side of real objects, which are signified by means of words.

Ad.—I do not see why we are not agreed upon that point, provided only that the words be words.

Aug.—I would like to know how you meet that one of whom we are wont to be told in jesting that the conclusion of the one with whom he was wrangling was that a lion had proceeded from his mouth: For when he had asked whether those things which we speak proceed from our mouth, and he (the one with whom the dispute was carried on) could not deny it, the other sophist turned the subject of conversation (which was easily done) so as to have his opponent name a lion; this done, he began, laughingly, to chaff him, and to force the argument, that because he had granted that what we

speak goes forth from our mouth, and he could not deny that he had uttered lion, it must be clear that a man so meek had thrown out a brute so savage.

Ad.—It had not been hard to meet this punster: for I would not grant that whatsoever we speak proceeds from our mouth. Indeed we signify the things that we speak; but from the mouth of the speaker proceeds, not the objective reality which is signified, but a sign which is a symbol of the object; excepting where the very signs themselves are signified, which division we considered just a little above.

Aug. — You would be armed quite well indeed against that opponent: however, what will you answer me asking whether man is a noun?

Ad.—What, but that it is a noun?

Aug.—Now, when I see you, do I see a noun?

Ad.—No.

Aug.—Will you have me to tell you what follows, as a logical conclusion?

Ad.—No; do not, I beg of you: for I answer myself that I am not the man who, I say, is a noun, when you ask whether man is a noun. For it has been settled that we give assent or dissent on the side of the reality which is signified.

Aug.—But it appears to me that your hitting upon

this answer has not been a mere accident. Indeed, the very law of nature itself implanted in our minds has proved your attention: for if I were to ask what man is, you would reply, perhaps, an animal. But if I were to ask what part of speech man is, you could answer correctly only a noun. Wherefore, while man is found to be both a noun and an animal, this is expressed on the side where symbol is, that on the side of reality which is symbolized. To that one therefore who asks whether man is a noun no other answer is to be given than the affirmative: for his question shows that he wants to know on the side of the symbol. But if he asks whether man is an animal I will respond in the affirmative even more readily. Because if, expressing neither noun nor animal, he were to ask simply what man is, the mind would turn, by that same fixed law of speech, to the object which is signified by the two syllables, *homo,* and the answer would be no other thing than animal: or even the full definition might be expressed, that is, an animal rational and mortal. Is that not clear to you?

Ad. — Quite clear: but, since we have granted that man is a noun, how shall we avoid that too flippant reply in which the conclusion is put together that we are not men?

AUG.—How think you, but by showing that the conclusion is not brought in from the side on which we agreed with the questioner. Or if he (the questioner acknowledges that he refers to that (the reply on the side of the symbol), then nothing is to be feared (from its logical force), for what is there to be dreaded in acknowledging that I am not man, that is, these three syllables—*hominem?* *

AD.—Nothing more true. Why then is it offensive when the inference is expressed: "You therefore are not man", when, according to these points granted, nothing is more true or more truly said?

AUG.—Because I cannot but think that the conclusion has reference to that which is signified by these two syllables as soon as the words are expressed, by reason of that law which is naturally very strong, so that the attention is turned to the objects signified immediately as soon as the symbols are perceived.

AD.—I take what you say.

* Quid enim metuam hominem, id est, tres istas syllabas non esse me confiteri?

CHAPTER IX

AUG.—I want you to understand, therefore, now that realities which are signified are to be rated at a higher value than their symbols. Whatsoever, indeed, is on account of something else must be of less worth than that for which it is: unless you think otherwise.

AD. — It seems to me that assent is not to be granted here too hastily. For when we express the word *filth*,[14] this noun I think is to be ranked far ahead of the reality which it signifies. What offends us when we hear is not the sound of this word; for by the change of one letter *coenum* (filth) becomes *coelum* (the sky); but we see what a difference there is between the objects signified by these nouns. Wherefore I would not attribute to this symbol what we shun in the object which it signifies. More readily, indeed, do we hear this than, by any one of the organs of sense, touch that.

AUG. — Very keen, indeed. Therefore it is untrue that all realities are to be rated as of higher value than their signs.

AD.—So it seems.

[14] *coenum.*

AUG. — Tell me, therefore, what plan you think they followed who gave a name to this object so foul and so much shunned (*coenum*): or whether you approve or disapprove their action.

AD. — I dare not presume either to approve or disapprove: and I do not know what plan they followed.

AUG.—Can you find, at any rate, what your purpose is when you pronounce this word?

AD.—I can, yes: My purpose is to signify so that I may teach him, with whom I speak, or remind him about that reality which I think ought to be taught or recalled.

AUG.—How this? The very fact of teaching or of reminding, or of being taught or reminded, which either you express fittingly by this word, or which is expressed to you—is not that fact itself to be esteemed of higher value than the mere word?

AD. — I grant that the knowledge which comes through this symbol, but I do not therefore think that the real object itself [filth] is so ranked.

AUG.—In this, our judgment, therefore, while it may not be true that all objective realities are to be ranked ahead of their symbols; it is not consequently untrue that every thing that is on account of another is less excellent than that other for which it is.

Indeed, the knowledge of filth, from which this noun has its fixed meaning, is to be esteemed of higher worth than the noun itself, which, we have found, is in turn to be esteemed more excellent than filth. But the one reason why knowledge is preferred before its symbol, of which we are speaking, is that this latter is proved to be on account of the former, not the former on account of the latter. Thus, if a certain glutton, and, as the Apostle has said, "a slave of sensuality",[15] were to say that therefore he lives in order that he may eat; a temperate man, who has heard his words, has not the patience to endure, and says: How much better would it be to eat in order to live? He says this, indeed, in accordance with that same rule. For he disapproved for no other reason than this, that he (the glutton) should place a value so low upon his life as to esteem it cheaper than the pleasure of the palate, declaring that he lives for feasting. And this one would be approved for no other reason rightly than because, understanding which one was for the other, that is, which subordinate to the

[15] The allusion is evidently to *Romans*, XVI, 18: "Such men do not serve Christ, the Lord, but their own desires; and by soft words and pleasing speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent."

other, he uttered the admonition that food is to be taken in order that we may live: that we do not live in order to be fed. In like manner you also perhaps, or any man who values things rightly, might answer one who talks and a noisy lover of words, who says that he teaches in order to talk: Why, man, not rather: talk in order to teach? But if these things are true, as you know that they are, you see surely how much less words are to be esteemed than that on account of which we use words; because the very use itself of words is more excellent than words, for words are in order that we may use them, but we use them in order to teach. As teaching, therefore, is better than talking, so is language better than words. Far more excellent, therefore, is teaching than mere words. But I want to hear what you, perhaps, think can be said against this.

AD.—I am quite agreed, indeed, that teaching is better than words. But whether every thing, that is on account of something else, is so fixed as a rule, that nothing can contradict it, I do not know.

AUG.—Elsewhere we shall take up that problem more fittingly and more carefully. For the present, the point which you grant is enough for that which I wish to prove. For you grant that the knowledge

of realities is more excellent than the symbols of realities. Therefore the knowledge of objective realities, which are signified, is to be preferred to the knowledge of their symbols (by which they are signified): or does it not so seem to you?

Ad.—Have I not granted that the knowledge of realities is to be preferred to the knowledge of symbols, and not to the symbols themselves? I fear, therefore, to be agreed with you here. For what, if, as the noun *filth* is to be ranked ahead of the objective reality which it signifies, so also the knowledge of this noun should be given a place before the knowledge of its material object, though the noun itself may be less excellent than that knowledge? Indeed there are four points here — the noun, the real object, knowledge of the noun, knowledge of the real object. As the first, therefore, is more excellent than the second, why may not the third also be better than the fourth? But granting that it may not be more worthy, does it follow that it must be counted as less?

Aug. — I see that you have retained quite well what you granted, and explained what you thought. But you understand, I think, that this noun of three syllables, which sounds when we say *vitium* (vice), is more excellent than that which it signifies; while

the knowledge of the noun is much less perfect than acquaintance of vices. While, therefore, you may determine these four points, and study them—the noun, the objective reality, the knowledge of the noun and the knowledge of the object; we rightly rank the first ahead of the second. Thus this noun placed properly in its line, where Persius says: "But this one is sotted with vice",[16] not only introduces no vice into the verse, but even adds something of ornament: while yet the objective reality, which is signified by this noun, makes vicious anything whatsoever in which it exists. But not so is the third ranked ahead of the fourth; for the fourth, we see, has a greater value than the third. Indeed the knowledge of this noun is of small importance compared with a knowledge of vices.*

AD.—Think you that the knowledge of this last division is to be preferred even when it makes men more unhappy? For, of all the pains that the heartlessness of tyrants has discovered, or their designs

[16] *Sed stupet hic vitio*—Aulus Persius Flaccus, a Roman Satyrist, born about A. D. 34. The words quoted are from *Satyr.* III, vers. 32.

* The right ethical view of vice, of course, is meant, the place of vice in the philosophy of human conduct.

invented, this same Persius gives the first place to that one by which men are tortured, who are forced to acknowledge the vices which they can not avoid.

AUG.—By that reasoning you can say the knowledge even of virtues is not to be preferred to the knowledge of this noun. For to see virtue, and not to have it is the punishment by which this same satyrist wished to have tyrants tortured.

AD.—God save us from such unreason. Now I see indeed that knowledge, by which learning nobly enriches the soul, is not to be blamed: but they, of all men, are to be esteemed the most unhappy, who, as Persius, I think, also judged, are afflicted by such disease that a remedy so powerful will not relieve it.

AUG. — You understand well: but, whatever the judgment of Persius may be, is not to our point now. For in such problems we do not depend upon the authority of these men (satyrists as a class). Then again, whether knowledge on one subject is to be preferred to another, is not to be settled here offhand. I hold what has been proved quite sufficiently: that is, that the knowledge of realities which are signified, while it may not be more excellent than the knowledge of its symbols, is yet more excellent than the symbols themselves. Wherefore let us study more and more thoroughly what is the quality of

that class of realities, which we saw, can be shown by themselves, without symbols, as talking, walking, sitting down, reclining, and other things of this kind.

AD.—I recall now what you say.

CHAPTER X

AUG.—Does it appear to you that we can show without a sign all things that we can straightway do when we are questioned, or do you make some exception?

AD. — I, indeed, studying over and over again this class as a whole, find nothing yet that can be taught without some sign, except perhaps talking, and possibly if someone were to ask what teaching is. For I see that he, whatsoever I shall have done to make him learn, following his inquiry, does not learn really from the object which he wishes to have made clear to him. For, as has been said, if he questions me about walking when I am not walking, or when I am doing something else, and I, on the spot endeavor by walking to show what he has asked, how shall I prevent his thinking that *to walk* is just so much as I have walked? But if he thinks that he will be deceived; and, indeed, whosoever

shall have walked more or less than I did, that one, he will think, has not walked. And what I have said of this one word will be true of all others, which I had thought could be shown without a sign, excepting the two named (talking and teaching).

AUG.—I accept that, indeed: But does it not appear to you that talking is one thing, teaching another?

AD.—It does seem so truly, for, if they were the same, no one would teach except in the fact of speaking; we however teach many things by means of other signs aside from words. Who, then, will doubt about the difference here?

AUG. — How, now, to teach and to signify, are they the same, or is there some difference?

AD.—I think they are the same.

AUG.—Does not he speak correctly who says that we signify in order that we may teach?

AD.—Correctly indeed.

AUG.—What if another one says that we therefore teach in order to signify, is he not easily refuted by the sentence above?

AD.—So, he is.

AUG.—If, therefore, we signify in order to teach, we do not teach in order to signify: teaching is one thing, signifying another.

Ad.—You speak truly; and I answered incorrectly that both are the same.

Aug.—Now answer this, whether he who teaches what teaching is, does that by signifying, or otherwise.

Ad.—I do not see how he could otherwise.

Aug. — What you said, therefore, just a little ahead is untrue, that when the question is asked what teaching is, the reality can be taught without the means of signs; since we see that not even this can be done without signifying, where you have granted that to signify is one thing, to teach is another. For if they are distinct, as it appears they are, and this latter is shown only by the former, then it is not indeed shown by itself, as it appeared to you. Wherefore nothing has been found, as yet, that can be shown by means of itself, excepting language, which, among other things which it signifies, signifies also itself: which yet, because itself is symbol, shows nothing that stands out clearly, that can be taught without means of symbols.

Ad. — I have nothing wherefor I may not be agreed.

Aug.—It is established therefore that nothing is taught without symbols; also that the knowledge itself ought to be to us more precious than the

symbols by which we know; though all things signified may not have greater worth than their signs.

Ad.—So it does appear.

Aug. — By what a way around has a thing so small been completed, do you remember, I ask? For, from the time that we began this fencing of words, which we have been doing now for quite some time, it has been worked out that we find these three points: (1) whether nothing can be taught without the means of signs; (2) whether some signs are to be preferred to the objects which they signify; (3) whether the knowledge of things is more excellent than their symbols. But there is a fourth point which I would like to know from you briefly, i. e. whether you think that these points are so cleared up that now you can not doubt about them.

Ad. — I would wish indeed that we had reached security through such turnings and jolts; but this your question makes me somehow, I know not how, uneasy and timid about giving assent. For you, it appears to me, would not ask this question if you did not have something to say against it: and the tangle itself of subjects does not permit me to examine the whole problem and to answer what is safe, fearing lest something may be hid in these windings that the keenness of my mind can not perceive.

AUG.—I take your hesitancy not unwillingly, for it indicates a mind not too hasty in its decisions, a most important safeguard of a tranquil mind. For it is very hard indeed not to be moved at all, when those things which we were wont to hold by ready and eager approval, are made to fall, and are wrenched, as it were, from our hands. Wherefore, as it is right to yield to reasons well studied and weighed, so it is perilous to hold things unknown as if we knew them. For, when those things which we presume are going to stand firmly and remain, are made to tumble down too frequently, it is to be feared that, falling into distaste and distrust of reason, we may lose confidence in clear truth itself.

But come, now, let us review more thoroughly, and see whether you can think correctly that we may entertain doubt on these points. And now I ask (for example), if someone who knows nothing of the art of bird-catching, which is wont to be done by means of reeds and birdlime, if such a one were to meet a birdcatcher, fitted out in his hunting dress, not hunting, but walking on the way; seeing him, the stranger would stop astonished, and, as is usual, think, wondering and inquiring what this make-up of a man could mean. But the birdcatcher seeing the astonished observer, with the purpose of mak-

ing himself known, throws off the reeds, and, by means of the sling and the snare, takes aim, strikes and captures a bird which he sees near by; would not this birdcatcher teach his spectator what he wanted to know by means of no sign made but the very objective reality itself?

Ad.—I fear that there may be something here like that which I said of him who asks what walking is. And, indeed I see that the whole art of birdcatching is not here set forth.

Aug. — It is easy to free yourself of that care; for I will add this: if the observer is so keenly intelligent that he grasps this complete branch of the art from what he sees. For it is to our point well enough if some things, though not all, can be shown, and some men can be taught without a symbol.

Ad.—That I also can add to this other one: for, if he is quick to understand, he will know what walking is fully, when walking is shown to him by a few paces.

Aug.—You may do that. I will grant it. And I not only do not oppose, but I favor the solution. You see, moreover, that this conclusion is reached by both of us, that, namely, some things can be taught without the means of symbols: and that what appeared right to us a little ago is not true, that,

namely, there is nothing absolutely that can be shown without symbols. For of these, not one only or another, but thousands of things come to mind which can be shown, without a sign expressed, but by themselves. For passing over numberless shows of men making exhibition in every theatre, without a sign, by means of the very realities themselves, does not God and does not nature exhibit and show to those who see them, the sun surely and this light diffused and clothing all these things visible, the moon also and other planets, the earth and the sea, and whatever lives in them without number.

But if we study more closely perhaps you will find that there is nothing actually learned by means of symbols: for when a sign is given to me, if it finds me not knowing the reality of which it is the sign, that sign can teach me nothing; but if it finds me knowing the reality, what then do I learn by the sign? For when I read: "*And their saraballae were not changed*",[17] the word (saraballae) does not show me the reality which it signifies. Indeed if a

[17] Daniel, chap. III, vers. 94—pre-Hieronomyan text. The word *saraballae*, a term of Chaldaic origin, is given here as an example of a symbol the meaning of which can not be known until it is translated into a known language.

certain head dress is called by this name, have I therefore, by the hearing of this word, learned what head is or what dress [18] is? I had known these before; and the knowledge of them came to me, not when they were named by others, but when they were seen by me. Indeed when these two syllables, which we utter when we say *caput,* first struck my ears I knew as little what they meant as when first I heard or read *saraballae.* But when *caput* (the word) was spoken repeatedly, I, remarking and taking note when it was spoken, found that it is the vocal term (the sign) of a reality which was already quite familiarly known to me by sight. But before I made this discovery this word was to me merely sound: I learned, however, that it is a sign, then, when I discovered of what reality it is the sign, which, as I have said, I learned, not by its signification, but by the sight of it. Therefore that the sign is learned by means of a known reality is more truly correct than that a reality is learned by means of its given sign.

In order that you may understand this more thoroughly, let us suppose that we hear now for the first time the word spoken *caput,* and not knowing

[18] tegmina—head coverings.

whether it is a sounding voice only, or signifying something also, we ask what *caput* is (remember that we want to have the knowledge, not of the real object which is signified, but of the sign of it, which knowledge we have not so long as we do not know of what reality it is the sign). If therefore to us thus inquiring, the object is pointed out with the finger, it is by that seeing that we learn the meaning of the sign, which before we had heard only, and not known. In this symbol, however, there are two elements, sound and meaning. We surely do not perceive the sound from the fact that it is a sign, but by the very fact that it strikes the ear; but the meaning we get by noting the reality which is signified. For, if that pointing of the finger can signify no other thing than that to which the pointing is; but the pointing is, not to the sign, but to the member which is called head; the conclusion must be that I have not learned the reality by that pointing, because I knew it beforehand, nor did I learn the sign, to which the pointing is not made. But I do not insist too much on the pointing of the finger; for to me it seems to be rather a sign of demonstration than a pointing out of the realities, whatever they may be, which are pointed out: as the adverb which we express, saying: "lo"

or "behold": for with this adverb also we are wont to extend the finger, lest one sign of demonstrating may not be enough. And, if I can, I shall try to prove this to you first of all, that by signs, which are called words, we learn nothing. For it is more true, as I have said, that we learn the force of the word, that is the meaning which is concealed in its sound by knowledge of the reality, which is signified, than that we perceive the reality by such signification.

Then, what I have said of head, that same I might have said also of coverings, and of numberless other things, which yet I now know, though these *sarabellae,* to the present time, I have not known; which yet, if someone were to signify their meaning by gesture or were to make a drawing of them, or were to point out something to which they are like, I will not say that he would not be teaching me, which I could do easily, if I wished to talk a little more: but I do say, what is very much to the point, he would not teach me by means of words. But if someone, having seen by chance this head dress (saraballae) where I am present with him, shall have brought the fact to my notice, saying: behold the saraballae, I may learn a thing which I did not know. I learn not by the words which are

uttered, but by the sight of that object, whence the result follows that I know and retain what is the force of that name. For when I learned the very reality of the object, I was not giving credit to the words of others, but to my own eyes. These, the words yet perhaps I did believe in order to take note, that is, in order to find what I could see by looking.

CHAPTER XI

So far words have value (to give them their very most): they remind us only to look for realities, they do not so exhibit the realities that we know them. But that one teaches me something, who holds out to my eyes, or to any one of the senses of the body, or even to the mind the things which I desire to know. By means of words, therefore, we learn only words: more still, only the sound and noise of words. For if those things which are not signs can not be words; though a word may be heard, I yet do not know that it is a word until I know its signification. By means, therefore, of realities *known* the knowledge of words also is made perfect: but by means of words *heard,* words are not learned; for we do not *learn* words that we know; nor can we say that we have learned words,

which we did not know, except by getting their meaning, which is, not by the hearing of sounds sent forth, but by the knowledge of realities signified. For it is the truest reason, and most truly said, that when words are uttered, we either know their meaning, or we do not: if we know, then we are said to be recalling rather than learning; but if we know not the meaning, then we are said not even to be recalling, but possibly we are moved to inquire.

But if you say that we can not know those head coverings, the name of which we know only so far as the sound goes, except by seeing them: On the other hand, we can not know the name itself quite fully, but by knowing the realities [of which the name or the noun is the symbol].

What we have received, finally, of the youths themselves, how they triumphed over the king and over the fires by faith and religion, what praises they sang to God, what honors they won even from their very enemy—all this have we learned otherwise than by words? I will answer that everything signified by these words had been beforehand the subject of our knowledge. For what three youths are, what a furnace is, what fire is, what a king, what, finally, being unhurt by fire and all the rest which these

words signify, I knew and held before I had the experience of hearing these words. But Ananias and Azarius and Misael are to me strangers, just as much as this strange word, *saraballae;* and these names have not helped me, and cannot now help me to know these men. But the facts all together, which are described in the account of history, I acknowledge that I *believe* to have been so done as they are described rather than that I *know* them: and they whom we believe too were not in ignorance as to this point of difference (between believing and knowing). For the Prophet says: "Unless you believe you shall not understand";[19] which he would not have said if he had thought that there is no difference between the two.

What I understand, that also I believe: but not everything that I believe do I also understand. Everything that I understand, however, I also know: I do not know all that I believe. And I do not, therefore, not know how useful it is to take on trust also many things that I do not know. With

[19] Isaias, VII, 9: But the quotation is according to a pre-Hieronymian reading of the Latin text — one of the thousands of minor text variations, which have not changed the substantial meaning or the sense of the Bible.—See APPENDIX, note 2,—page 96.

this advantage of believing I count also this narrative of the three youths.[20] Wherefore, while there is a vast reach of things that I can not know, I do know what is the advantage of believing.

But, referring now to all things that we understand, we consult, not the one speaking, whose words sound without, but truth within, presiding over the mind, reminded perhaps by words to take note (to mark evidence). But he teaches who is consulted, Christ, who is said to "dwell in the interior man":[21] that is, the changeless power of God,* and the everlasting wisdom, which truly every rational soul consults: but so far is it opened out to each one, as each one is capable to grasp by reason of a good or a bad habit of life. And, if sometimes errors are made, that is not by reason of fault in the objective evidence consulted; just as it is also not the fault of this light, which is bright without, that the eyes of the body are frequently deceived: This light (external) we acknowledge is sought in reference to things visible in order that it may show us visible objects so far as we have the power to discern.

[20] The account taken from Daniel, as above.

[21] Ephesians, III, 16-17.

* See APPENDIX, note 3,—page 97.

CHAPTER XII

But, if we consult the light in reference to colors and the other properties which we perceive through the body; if we consult the elements of this world, the same also corporeal, the objects of our senses; if we consult the organic senses themselves, which the mind uses as interpreters to know such things; and, if in reference to those things that we understand, we consult interior evidence, what can be said to have it made clear that by means of words we learn nothing but the sound that strikes the ear? And indeed everything that we perceive, we perceive either by a corporeal organ of sense, or by the power of the mind. These former are the object of the senses, the latter of understanding: or, to speak after the manner of our own (Christian) authors, we give the name carnal to the former, spiritual to the latter. When we are questioned concerning these former, we answer what we perceive if they are present: as when we are questioned looking at the new moon as to its size and position. Here he who asks, if he does not see the moon, believes our words, and often he believes not: but he does not learn at all, unless he himself sees what is described. Here now he learns, not by means of the

words which are sounded, but by means of objective reality and his own senses. For the same words sound to one seeing, as they also sounded to him not seeing. But when there is question, not about things which we perceive present, but about what we have formerly perceived, we speak then, not of things themselves, but of images impressed by them and stored in the memory. As to these, how we can utter them truly, if we do not behold them as true, I do not know, except that we tell or recount, not what we see or perceive, but what we have seen or have perceived. Thus do we carry in the inner courts of memory those images, documents of things perceived before. Contemplating these in mind we utter no falsehood when we speak in good conscience. But these documents [22] are for us; for he who hears us (telling of past experience), if he has perceived the facts that I tell, and if he was present, does not learn by my words; but he recalls by means of the impressions which he has taken away of the same facts; but, if he did not himself experience what I tell, who does not see that such a one *learns* not, but rather *believes* * my words?

[22] documenta—means or the instruments of teaching us.

* The distinction which Augustine makes here between

But when there is question of those things which we view in the mind, that is, by means of understanding and reason, we speak truly the things which we behold as present in that interior light of truth, by which he who is called the interior man is enlightened, whence also comes his joy. But then also our hearer, if he himself sees those things with the simple and unseen eye, knows what I say, not by means of my words, but by his own judgment—the vision of his own mind. Therefore I, speaking what is true, do not *teach* even this one viewing the same true things in his own mind; for he is taught, not by means of my words, but by means of the same mental realities which God, by the natural light of intelligence opens out within the soul: whence, if questioned, he might have answered the very same. But what is more unreasonable than to think that he is taught by my speech, who, if he were questioned before I spoke, could have explained the very same? For, it frequently happens, that

learning and *believing* is obvious. It is the difference between *renewing* our own former sense impressions, conscious of their objective reality, and *holding* what we hear on the word of a witness until it is verified by our own experience, proved or confirmed by the common agreement of men.

being questioned, someone answers in the negative, and then when he is urged by other questions, replies affirmatively. That is done by reason of the weakness of the one who seeing can not consult this light on the entire problem. He is reminded to do this in particular points, when he is questioned upon them one by one. The very same which he can not do in the entire problem, he can discern in the parts of which the whole is made up, whereto, he is directed by the words of the one who questions, not yet by teaching words, but by words inquiring in that measure in which he who is questioned is within, in the inner powers of the soul, fit to learn. Just as, when I was asking this very question on which we are now engaged: whether or not nothing can be taught by means of words, and first it seemed to you unreasonable, because you were unable to see clearly the whole problem. So, therefore, should I have placed my questions as to make them correspond to the powers of your mind to hear that master teaching within. Thus I would express what you acknowledge to be true while I am talking: and you are sure, and you affirm that you know these things. Whence did you learn them? You might say, perhaps, that I taught them. Then I would reply: What if I were to say that I had seen a man flying?

Would my words so then make you secure as if you were to hear it said that men of understanding are better than fools? You would answer in the negative surely; and you might reply that you do not believe the former; or, even though you were to believe, that you know nothing about it; but this latter, you would say you know most surely. From this now, by way of example, you would understand that you have not learned anything by means of my words: not in that, about which, after my stating it, you remained in ignorance (the flying exploit), and not in that which you knew very well (the relative worth of reasoning men and fools). And indeed, even though you were to be questioned about each one of these points, you could take an oath that that is unknown, that this is well known to you.

Then, in truth, would you acknowledge all that you had formerly denied, when you knew, as points clear and certain, the elements of which all that is made up: namely that all things that we speak (stand in one of three relations to our hearers) :—Either the hearer knows not whether or not they are true, or he knows that they are untrue, or he knows that they are true. In the first case of these three he will either believe (take on trust) or he will form an opinion, or he will hesitate. In the second case he

will either take a stand against what is said, or he will reject it. In the third he simply witnesses to what has been said (confirming its truth). In no case of these three, therefore, does he learn. For he who, after hearing our words, still remains ignorant as to their objective meaning; as he also, who knows that what he has heard is untrue; and he again who could have expressed the very same thought, if he had been asked, is proved surely to have learned nothing by means of my words.

CHAPTER XIII

From the foregoing it follows, therefore, that in the things which are discerned by the mind,[23] one who can not grasp that which the mind of the speaker discerns, hears his words to no purpose, excepting the case where it is practicable to take a thing on trust so long as it can not be known. But he (in this division of realities of the mind) who sees clearly what words mean, is, in the court of the

[23] Things which the mind discerns—realities of thought which transcend the powers of the material organism—as goodness, right, wrong, being and the qualities which we find in the actual world of things and attribute to other things.

mind, a disciple of the truth; in the world of external things, he is the judge of the one who speaks, or more properly of his speech. Not unfrequently indeed the hearer knows what has been said, while the speaker may perhaps not know the force of his own words. As where someone who follows the Epicurean school of philosophy, and who believes that the human soul is mortal, may express those very reasons by which more far-seeing thinkers have proved its immortality: He hearing, who can judge things spiritual, thinks that such a one has uttered valid arguments: but he who speaks them knows not that they are true; even more, he thinks that they are quite untrue. Is he, therefore, to be thought of as *teaching* what he does not know? But he uses the very same words, which one who knows could also use.

Wherefore now not even this is left to words, that by them the mind of the speaker at least is made manifest, since it is not certain whether he knows what he is talking about. Take in addition those who lie and those who deceive, by whom you will understand easily that not only is the mind opened by means of words, but by means of words also the mind is concealed. For I do not by any means call into question the fact that the words of truthful men

aim at this and profess to make clear the meaning, the mind of the speaker. They indeed would realize this, as every-one grants, if liars were not allowed to speak.

However, we may have experienced, both in ourselves and in others, that frequently words are expressed which are not the proper terms of the thought actually in mind; which I see can be verified in two ways: when (first) either a form of speech memorized and frequently repeated is expressed by one who is thinking of other things, which is verified in us often when we chant a hymn: (second) when, aside from our intention, and by a slip of the tongue, some words escape us in place of others, which we meant to say: for here also signs are heard not of those realities which we had in mind (but other things not then actually the object of our thought or intention). And indeed they who lie think also of the thing that they are saying. Though we may not know whether or not they speak the truth, we do know that they have in mind what they are saying, if one of the two points, which I have just made as exceptions, is not verified in them: which, if someone insists that it does sometimes happen, as appears when it does happen (though frequently it is unknown, and has deceived me often), I do not oppose such a statement.

But in addition to these there is another class (of words that do not convey their meaning), a class far-reaching indeed, and the source of numberless misunderstandings and disputes. That is, when he who speaks is thinking of the same things which he utters, indeed; but frequently the same only to himself and to some others: but to the one to whom he is speaking, and to others also the word has not the same meaning. Let someone say, for example, in our hearing, that by some brute animals man is surpassed in manly force (virtute): we, on the spur of the moment, can not endure it, and with much animation we reject the sentence so untrue and so harmful; while he, perhaps, the speaker, is using the term manly force (virtutem) to mean the physical strength of the body; and by that noun he may be pronouncing that which he has in mind, and he does not lie, and he is not wrong in reality, and he has not put together words that lingered in his memory, while he was revolving something else in mind, and he is not, by a slip of the tongue, giving utterance to something other than that which he turns over in mind: but he is only calling that reality of which he is thinking by a name other than that which we call it. On this point we would be immediately agreed with him if we could see his thought,

which thought, by the words uttered and by the sentence completed, he has not yet been able to lay open to us. A definition, they say, will remedy this source of error; so that if, in this dispute, the speaker were to define what manly force (virtus) is, it would be clear, they say, that the disagreement is not about the objective reality, but about the meaning of a word. If I am to grant that this is so, how often is one found who makes a good definition? And yet there are many arguments against the systematic teaching of the art of argumentation; which it is not in line with our purpose to study now, and they are not on all sides approved by me.

I pass over the fact that there are many things that we do not hear distinctly, and yet we are insistent long and strongly as if we had heard accurately. As you, just a little while ago, were saying that you had heard that by a certain Punic word piety is signified, that, too, from those to whom this language is quite familiar, while I said that the word means mercy. Then insisting, I said that you had forgotten what you had heard: for it seemed to me that you had said, not piety, but faith, while yet you were seated quite close to me, and these two nouns do not by any means deceive the ears by reason of

likeness of sound. Yet for some time I thought that you knew not what had been said to you: (instead the truth was) I did not know what you had said: for if I had heard you correctly, it would not have appeared to me at all unreasonable that piety and mercy are signified by the same word in the Punic tongue.* These things happen not unfrequently: but we shall pass them over, as I said, in order that I may not appear to be doing an injury to words, where the carelessness of the hearer is to be blamed, or again the deafness of men. Those points, which I referred to above, are more difficult, where by means of the words very clearly perceived by the ear, and truly Latin, we can not yet, though we are of the same tongue, know the thought of the speaker.

But now I go back and I grant that when words are perceived by the hearing of one who knows their meaning, he may be assured that the speaker has

* It appears from this reference to the Punic tongue, and other allusions in Augustine's works, that the Roman Africans of the time were generally familiar with the language of the old culture of Carthage. An example is found in Sermo CLXVII:—Proverbum notum est Punicum, quod quidem Latine vobis dicam, quia Punice non omnes nostis.—Confer Epist. XVII ad Maximum Madaurensem, num. 2.

been thinking of those realities which the words signify: does it follow from this—the point which we are studying here—that he learns also whether or not the speaker has uttered the truth?

CHAPTER XIV

Do teachers make the claim that their own thoughts, and not rather the branches of learning which they think they deliver by talking, are perceived and retained by pupils? Who, indeed, is so unreasonably careful as to send his child to school to learn what the teacher thinks? But all these branches of learning, which teachers profess to teach, the doctrine of virtue even and of wisdom itself, when they have explained them by means of words; then they who are called pupils, consider in the inner court of the mind whether what has been said is true, that is, in the measure of their own mental power they see the agreement that is within. Then, therefore, they learn; and when they find within that true things have been spoken, they applaud, not knowing that their applause belongs rather to those who are taught than to their teachers: if, indeed, the teachers know what they are talking about. But men are deceived, so that they call those teachers,

who are not teachers at all, just because generally no pause intervenes between the time of speaking and the time of thinking: and because after the suggestion of the one who speaks they learn instantaneously within, they think that they have learned from him who spoke from without.

But what the full advantage is of words, not a small advantage indeed, if it is rightly viewed, we shall study, if God so grants, elsewhere. For the present I have brought to your notice that we must not give to words more than belongs to them. So that now we may not only believe, but we may begin to understand also how truly the word is written on divine authority that we claim no one as our master on earth, because one is the Master of all in heaven.[24] But what the meaning is of this "in heaven", He will teach us, by whom we are reminded through the instrumentality of men, by means of word symbols, and from without, so that turned to Him within, we may become learned in the inner life of the soul. He will teach us, to love whom and to know whom is itself the happiness of life; that happiness which all men declare that they seek; but few have rejoiced in finding it. But now I want

[24] Matthew, cap. XXIII, vv. 8-10.

you to tell me what you think of this whole explanation of mine. For if you have approved all that has been said as true, then you might have answered on every sentence, one by one, that you know it, if you had been questioned. You see, therefore, from whom you have learned these points. Surely not from me, to whom you could have given the correct answer in every point, if I had asked. But if you have not known these things to be true, then neither do I teach you, nor he (the inner man, the judgment of reason from within) : but I do not teach, because I never can teach; he does not teach, because you as yet are incapable of learning.*

Ad. — But I have learned by the admonition of your words that by the means of words a man can do no more than be admonished to learn; and that it is very little, indeed, some little fraction only of the thought of the one who speaks that is made apparent by the means of his language. But whether the things that are spoken are true or not, I have learned that he alone can teach who dwells within, who reminds us that he is dwelling within, when words are spoken without. This same dweller within I shall now, by his own favor, love the more ardently as I advance in knowing him better. However for

* See Appendix, note 4,—page 97.

this reasoned explanation of yours, which you have used continually, I am grateful chiefly on this account, that every point which I was ready to contradict, your explanation took up and solved the difficulty: and nothing absolutely, that was making me doubt, has been left by you, on which that unseen judgment within would not give the same answer to me as was stated by your words from without.

APPENDIX

NOTE 1, page 12—The prayer of priests—*Sicut sacerdotes faciunt*—This refers evidently to some of the beautiful expressions of Catholic faith and piety which come to us from the early centuries, chiefly in the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the public service of the Church. Augustine and the boy, Adeodatus, had come to know these prayers and to follow their meaning first in the Cathedral church of Saint Ambrose in Milan, later in Rome, on their homeward journal, 387, and now in the churches of provincial Africa. In later years, when Augustine was bishop, he points frequently to these prayers of the Liturgy as to an index and a proof of the Catholic thought, the mind and the meaning of the Apostolic Church. The same thought is expressed by Pope Coelestine I after Augustine's death, about 431, in a letter addressed to the Bishops of Gaul:—"Obsecrationum quoque sacerdotalium sacramenta respiciamus, quae ab Apostolis tradita in toto mundo atque in omni Catholica Ecclesia uniformiter celebrantur: ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi—Vide Denzinger—*Enchiridion Symbolorum—Edit. decima, num.* 139. I shall try to turn the thought of Augusine into English on this same point, *De Civitate Dei, lib. VIII, cap. 27*—"But who of the faithful has ever heard a priest standing at the altar of God, at an altar built unto the honor and worship of God, and built over the body of a Martyr—who has ever heard a priest, in the prayers there, say: "I offer to thee, Peter, or I offer to thee, Paul, or I offer to thee,

Cyprian? Yet the offering is to God in the memorial churches of these [Martyrs]—The offering is to God, who made them men and made them Martyrs, and raised them to heavenly honor with his holy angels. Thus we [by that external worship] express gratitude to the true God for their triumph; and, by renewing remembrances of such crowns and rewards of victory, we are encouraged, invoking his name, by his aid, to follow on, to persevere. Whatever services, therefore, are offered in the holy places of Martyrs are ornaments to their memory, they are not divine rites or sacrifice offered to dead men. . . . They are sacred to the merits of the Martyrs in the name of the Lord of Martyrs. But he who knows the one Sacrifice of Christians, which is offered there, knows also that these are not sacrifices offered to the Martyrs".

NOTE 2, page 77—The text:—"Nisi credideritis non intelligetis"—Isaias, VII-9, according to an ancient Latin version, is quoted frequently by Augustine to explain the psychology of Faith and the act of believing. Some of the explanations are types of accurate and clear thought. They are worthy of study—

Thus in a letter written about A. D. 413 on the subject of "*Seeing God*" Augustine says:—"Our knowledge is made up of things seen and things believed; but in things which we see, we also ourselves are witnesses; in things which we believe we are moved to have faith by the witnessing of others: while in those things which we do not recall as having seen, and which we do not now see, there are symbols either in spoken words or in written forms, or in documents of some kind, which being seen, other things that are not seen are believed. But we say quite correctly that we know, not only

things that we have seen or that we see now, but we know also, whatsoever we have believed moved by [the authority of] fitting testimony or witnesses. Further, if we are said not ineptly to *know* that which we most firmly *believe,* it follows that we may be said to behold in mind things which we rightly hold on credit, though they be not present to our senses. For knowledge is attributed to the mind, whether the mind retains something known through [the instrumentality of] the organs of sense, or through a power of the soul itself: And Faith [the idea] itself indeed is seen by the mind, though in virtue of that very same faith we believe what is not seen"—(*Epist. ad Paulinam,* CXLVII, n. 8. See also *Enarrat. in Psalm.* CXVIII—Serm. 18, n. 3; *Tract in Joann.* XXVII, n. 7.

NOTE 3, page 78—The changeless power of God and his everlasting wisdom—These words refer evidently to the text in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "Christum Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam .... praedicamus"—cap. I, v. 24—The thought centers upon the eternal WORD and the Wisdom of God in person—the ὁ λόγος, "Lux vera quae illuminat omnem hominem venienten in hunc mundum". (John, 1-9)—It is the simple strong logic of facts as they follow from the fact of the Incarnation—the same logic which translates itself into faith and Christian Life, which is revealed in the results of Christian civilization and art. The same thought will be found expressed by Augustine in the Tracts upon the Gospel according to St. John—See *Tract. in Joan. II*; see also Epist. ad Volusianum, CXXXVII.

NOTE 4, page 92—The thought of Augustine here is fundamental to any workable theory or practice of teaching. It does

not detract from the efficiency of the work of a teacher, evidenced in the complete argument of this little treatise. It does not lessen the need of method in teaching, and the help to be found in methods for both teacher and pupil. Augustine simply insists upon what he has shown to be a prerequisite for teaching and learning. He drives home the point which he has tried to make clear, that is, the power of the pupil to grasp a thought, to assimilate, to make it his own will be the measure of what he learns.

Augustine's allusion here to the divine Teacher, to Christ, the supreme Master of human intelligence is to be understood, as he explains elsewhere, not of a supernatural light of grace, or of a divine energy above the established order of nature. The reference to Christ is to Christ in his divine Personality, to Christ as God, the Author of created things, the Author therefore of that power in the human mind which grasps objective truth, which knows truth normally by process of reasoning and intuition, which can not reject the evidence of objective reality. Christ, the Teacher is understood as the supreme Power and Intelligence. His design is revealed in the order of nature established in the universe. His law, the laws of nature are seen at work in the phenomena of this visible frame of living and non-living things.

Speaking on this same point in *De Trinitate* Augustine says: But it is rather to be held that the nature of the intelligent mind is so made that connected with its own intelligible realities in the natural order, God so ordering, it beholds these in a certain light of its own kind, incorporeal: just as the eye, this organ of sense, in this corporeal light, beholds the objects within its range for which it has its own capacity and fitness."—(*De Trinitate,* lib. XII, cap. 15).*

* Sed potius credendum est mentis intellectualis ita conditam esse naturam, ut rebus intelligibilibus, naturali ordine, disponente Conditore, subiuncta sic ista videat in quadam luce sui generis incorporea, quedmadmodum oculus carnis videt quae in hac corporea luce circumadiacent, cuius lucis capax eique congruens est creatus. *De Trinitate—lib.* XII, cap. 15.

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